

Secretary of State **NEWS**

Brian P. Kemp, Georgia Secretary of State

Press Office

214 State Capitol Atlanta, Georgia 30334

TEL: 404-656-4269 FAX: 404.657.5804



For Immediate Release

Contact: Jared Thomas
Press Secretary
404-656-4269

Secretary of State Advises Georgians on Charitable Donations

ATLANTA (Dec. 3, 2013) – Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp offers advice to individuals planning to donate to charitable organizations during the holiday season. As Secretary of State, Kemp serves as Georgia’s charities regulator.

Secretary Kemp said, “During this holiday season, let’s make the most of our contributions to individuals and families in need. Many wish to give back to those affected by tragedies through charitable donations, and I ask that donors familiarize themselves with an organization before giving. Charitable donations have the most impact when given to groups that spend responsibly. Advance research can do a lot to ensure gifts are being used properly.”

Secretary Kemp issued the following tips for charitable giving:

- Research charities before you contribute. The percentage of your contribution that a charity spends on fundraising activities, employee salaries, or expenses which do not directly support the charity’s stated mission varies greatly by organization.
- A number of online resources can help you research charities. The Better Business Bureau (give.org) and GuideStar (guidestar.org) provide detailed information about nonprofit organizations. Also, take time to review the organization’s own website.
- Be wary of telephone solicitors asking for contributions. If you are solicited by phone, ask that the individual put their request in writing and provide complete information about the charitable program. Also, ask if the person conducting the solicitation is a volunteer or a paid solicitor.
- NEVER give your credit card, debit card, or bank account information to a telephone solicitor. Also, be particularly cautious of couriers willing to rush out to your home or business to pick up your contribution.
- If a tax deduction is important to you, make sure the organization has a tax deductible status with the Internal Revenue Service. “Tax exempt,” “non-profit,” and “tax deductible” mean different things. Just because a solicitor says their organization is non-profit or tax-exempt, that does not mean you can legally deduct your contribution. Only “tax deductible” means your contribution is deductible on your income tax return. Make sure you get a receipt which shows the amount of your contribution and states that the contribution is tax deductible.

The IRS website (irs.gov/charities) has a searchable database of organizations eligible to receive tax deductible charitable contributions.

- Many charitable solicitors ask for contributions of clothing, other household items, and vehicles. IRS rules concerning valuations and receipts have changed significantly in recent years; be sure you understand them completely (irs.gov/charities/contributors).
- Not all organizations with charitable sounding names are actually charities. Many organizations adopt names that are similar to well-known charities. Be sure you know exactly who is asking for your contribution.
- Watch out for organizations that use questionable techniques such as sending unordered merchandise or invoices after you have turned them down for a donation. You are under no obligation to pay for or return items received under these circumstances.
- Most police and fire departments are funded by tax dollars. However, their unions and social organizations may solicit you for contributions. These groups typically use paid fundraisers to solicit donations. If you are solicited by an organization using the words “police” or “firefighter,” call your local police or fire department to verify that the group is actually supporting the department and to find out how much of their contributions actually are used for their programs.
- Be skeptical of organizations which list only post office boxes, “PMB” addresses, or mail drop suite numbers.

Citizens can research organizations registered in Georgia by visiting the Secretary of State’s website at www.sos.ga.gov. Complaints can be filed against charitable organizations on the Secretary of State’s Professional Licensing Boards Division website at <http://www.sos.ga.gov/plb>. If you have additional questions, please call the Georgia Secretary of State’s Professional Licensing Boards Division, which oversees charitable organizations, at 478-207-2440.

Brian Kemp has been Secretary of State since January 2010. Among the office’s wide-ranging responsibilities, the Secretary of State is charged with conducting efficient and secure elections, the registration of corporations, the oversight and regulation of securities and the administration of professional license holders.

###